

DATE: 08/06/2003

SUBJECT: MONTANA BLM LAND EXCHANGE PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Montana/Dakotas BLM has been pursuing land exchanges within several of its field offices since the early 1980s. Our past exchanges have resulted in a net decline of more than 87,000 acres of public land. The land leaving BLM administration generally goes into private ownership. In addition, BLM land was used as the trading stock to implement the Crow Boundary Settlement Act.

ISSUES:

Past Efforts:

We have acquired about 164,000 acres of nonfederal land in exchange for about 251,000 acres of public land. In recent years many of these were multi-phased exchange proposals developed with facilitators through which numerous public land parcels were conveyed to a number of different landowners (usually adjoining landowners who desired to own the public land parcel) in exchange for a single private land parcel. The larger assembled, facilitated land exchanges, such as the recently completed Axolotl Lakes and the Ward Ranch Phase I exchanges, involved a ratio of 3 to 10 acres of public land in exchange for one acre of private land.

The **Crow Boundary Settlement Act (CBSA) Multi-phased Land Exchange** was completed in July 2003. A total of 46,890 acres of public land was conveyed for 44,020 acres of land (State of Montana and private) within the Crow Reservation and was converted to Trust status. The CBSA was enacted in order to redress an 1891 survey error (107th Meridian) whereby the eastern boundary of the Crow Indian Reservation was erroneously located on-the-ground, and as a result, the Crow Tribe had been denied land granted to it in and 1868 treaty.

Current Efforts:

Ward Ranch Land Exchange - This is a facilitated, assembled, multi-phased proposal that will benefit recreation and wildlife management along Hauser Lake near Helena. Phase I, completed in June 2002, involved exchanging 1,783 acres of public land for 535 acres of the ranch. The final phase (Phase II), in which 6,487 acres of public land will be exchanged for 969 acres of the ranch, is scheduled to be completed in November 2003.

North Chinook Land Exchange -- This is a facilitated, assembled, multi-phased proposal that will consolidate into public ownership land surrounding the North Chinook Reservoir in Blaine County to enhance public access, recreation opportunities, and resource management on the land. Phase I, scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2003, involves 1,542 acres of public land and 1,920 acres of private land.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

Land exchanges help us to accomplish three major goals: 1) bring lands with high public resource values into public ownership; 2) consolidate land ownership patterns to facilitate more effective and efficient management of resources and bureau programs; and 3) dispose of public land parcels identified through our land use plans.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest varies from one exchange to another and is generally stronger in the actual vicinity of exchange parcels.

CONTACT:

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